

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2011

Defense Secretary Robert Gates
Office of the Secretary
The Pentagon
Room 3E880, 20301-1000
Arlington, Virginia 20301-0001

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We have been surprised during the debate over whether or not Congress should act promptly to raise the debt limit at the absence of discussion of what our failure to do so would mean for combat operations in Afghanistan. References to the previous occasion on which the government was shut down – 15 years ago – seem to us to be of very limited relevance given that we now have so many of our military engaged in combat.

We write therefore to ask you what the effect on our combat operations, and especially on the military personnel in the field in Afghanistan – and to a similar if somewhat lesser extent in Iraq – would be if Congress were to fail to raise the debt limit and a government shutdown occurred. Would the troops in the field be imperiled if we reached a point where for however long the Pentagon was unable to spend money?



BARNEY FRANK
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services



NORMAN DICKS
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations